

A young girl with long blonde hair is holding a large orange pumpkin. She is wearing a light-colored plaid shirt and dark blue jeans. She is standing in a field of pumpkins and corn stalks. The background is a soft-focus field of pumpkins and corn stalks.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE AUTUMN


 BOOKS FOR YOUNG EXPLORERS
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

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by Suzanne Venino



A smiling scarecrow guards pumpkins and corn on a farm.

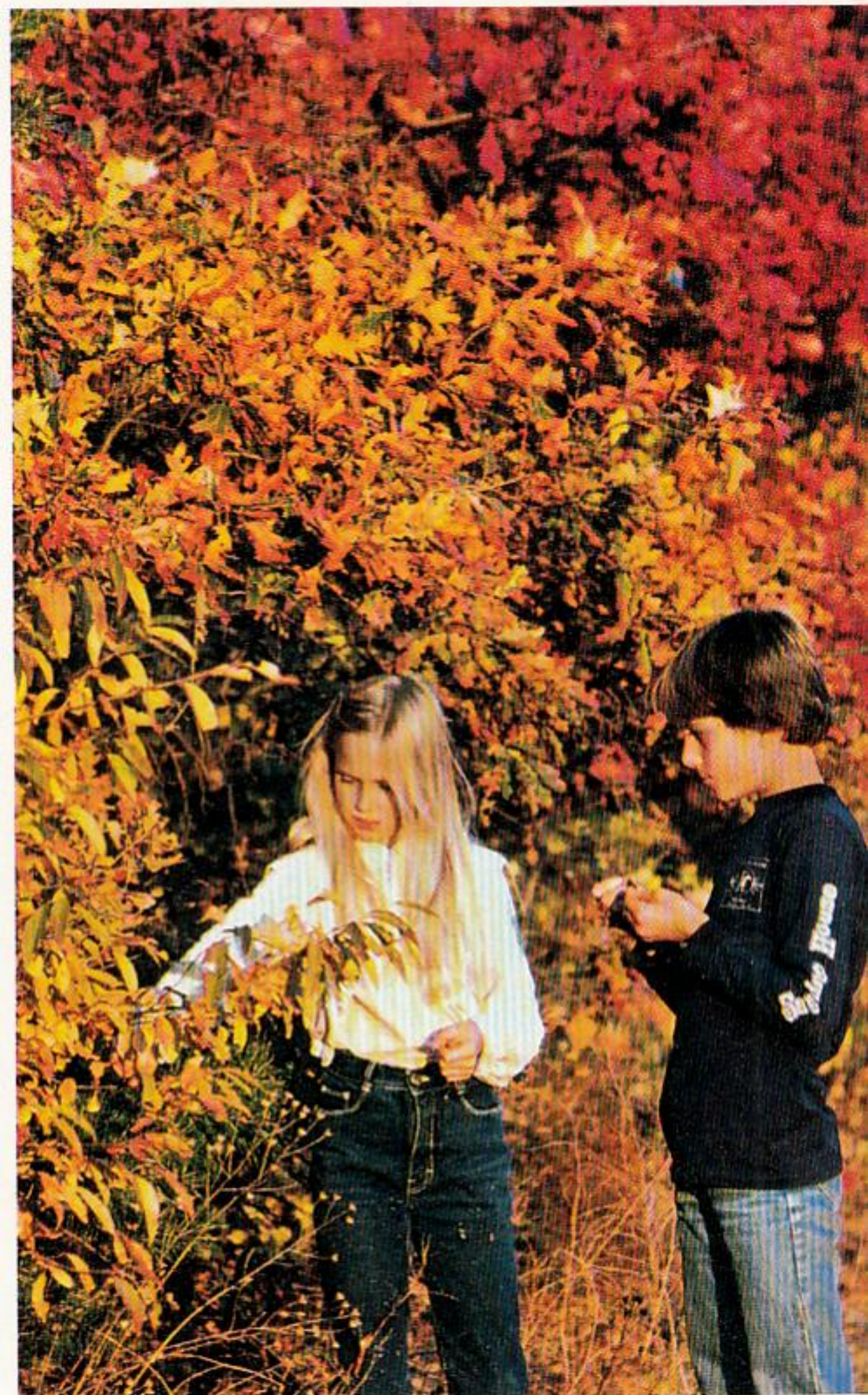
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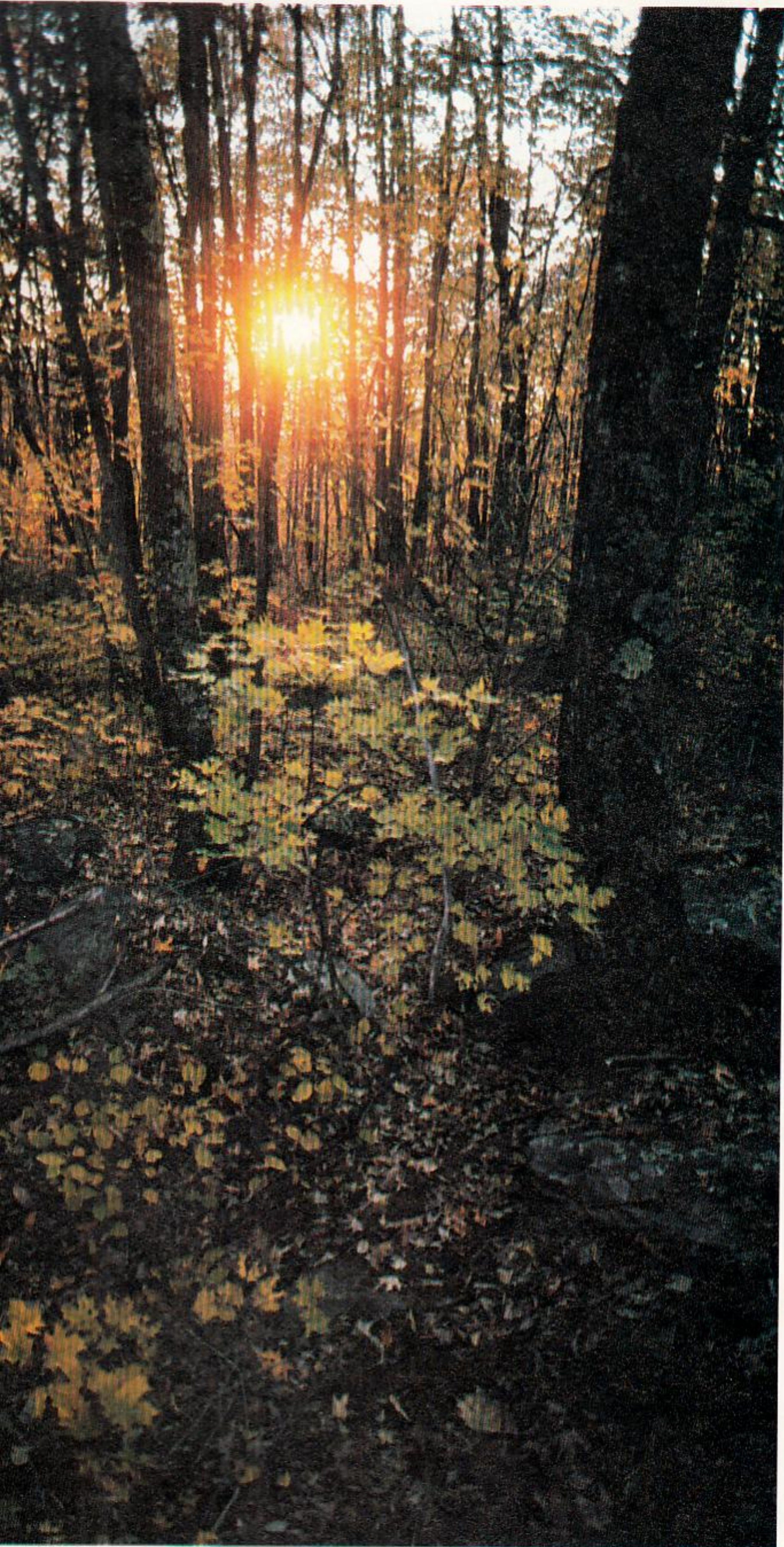
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Autumn has come to this forest. Autumn is the season of the year when the leaves of many trees change color—from green to orange, red, or yellow. Two friends named Portia and Shane look closely at the bright orange leaves of a wild cherry tree.





The setting sun shines through trees in the woods. The days grow shorter in the autumn. Each day, darkness comes a little bit earlier than the day before. But there is still enough light for Shane to play outside after school.

The autumn months are September, October, and November. When September comes and summer ends, many exciting changes take place outdoors. You can see the changes all around you. You can feel them in the air. There are cool days when the air is clear and crisp.



Do the leaves change color in the autumn where you live? They do in many places. As the leaves slowly die, the green in them disappears.



The leaves on these maple trees have turned bright colors.
Soon the leaves will come loose and drop off.





Two horses graze in a quiet pasture.
There are fallen leaves on the grass.
A gust of wind sends more leaves
fluttering to the ground. Some leaves
drop in a stream and then drift away.
Soon many trees will be bare.



Fall is another name for autumn.
Do you know why? It's because this
is the season when leaves fall from trees.





Leaves, leaves,
everywhere! Portia
and Shane play in
leaves they raked
into a pile in
Shane's backyard.

Raking leaves is
an autumn chore.
People often
put leaves in bags
to be taken away.
Sometimes people
put dead, rotting
leaves around
garden plants to
help them grow.

In a meadow, the children discover what happens to many plants in the autumn. They dry out, and their seeds are scattered.





The dry pods of milkweeds have burst open. The seeds inside will float away on bits of fluff like tiny parachutes. Shane blows away the seeds of a fluffy dandelion. Portia helps scatter milkweed seeds. The seeds travel far and wide. They will have room to grow into new plants in the spring.



A chipmunk has found an acorn, the fruit of an oak tree. A squirrel searches for food on the ground. In autumn, chipmunks and squirrels scurry about, gathering seeds and nuts. Chipmunks store food in their underground homes. Squirrels often bury their food. These animals may then have enough to eat in winter, when food is hard to find.





Fall is a busy season on a farm. It is time to harvest the crops that have grown all summer, and time to get ready for winter. Portia cleans an ear of corn she picked from a stalk. A farmer drives a big machine called a combine. It cuts down the cornstalks, and it removes the corn from the cobs.



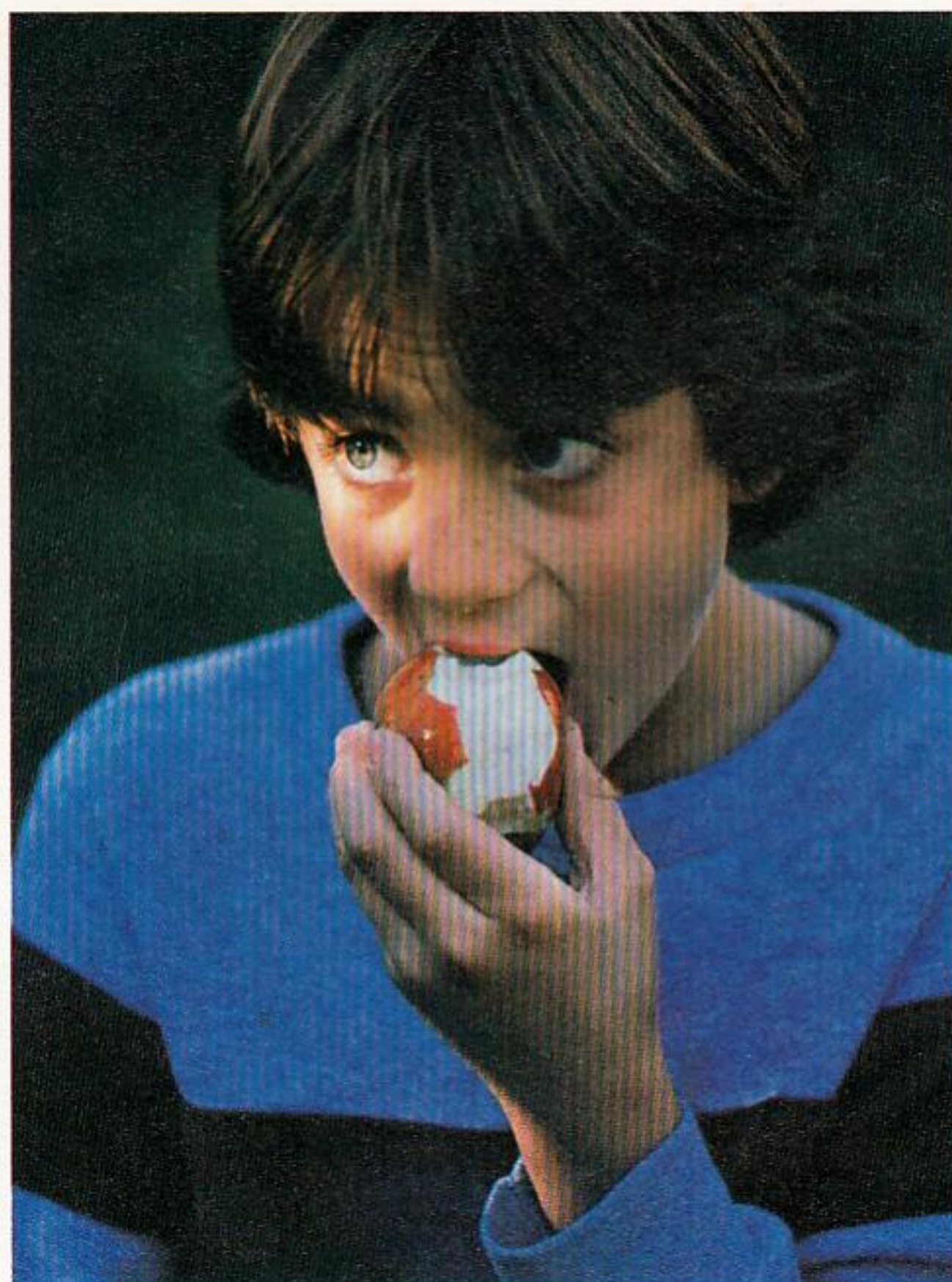
Kernels of corn pour from the combine into a big wagon. During the winter, the farmer will use the corn to feed pigs, cows, chickens, and other farm animals. Three pheasants search for bits of corn left in the field.





In autumn, apples are ripe and ready for picking. Shane and Portia pick apples in an orchard. Shane bites into one right away.

Apples can be baked in pies, pressed into cider, or made into applesauce. Fruit that falls to the ground becomes food for birds, insects, and other animals.







In a pumpkin field, Portia and Shane look for just the right pumpkin to make into a jack-o'-lantern. With some help from their parents, they will hollow out the pumpkin and carve a scary face on it. A candle inside will shine a greeting to children who come trick-or-treating on Halloween night.





Look up in the air! A big flock of snow geese is heading south. So are these three Canada geese. In autumn, many kinds of birds fly to warmer places where they can find food more easily. Soon the weather will grow cold, and frost will cover the fields.



A raccoon
peeks from its
den in the trunk
of a dead tree.
The raccoon
will sleep here
in cold weather.



A young woodchuck
spends most of the
autumn eating. It eats
as much food as it
can find, and it grows
very fat. Woodchucks
sleep through most
of the winter in their
underground homes.
In autumn, the fur
of a red fox grows
much thicker. The fur
will keep the fox warm in
the cold months ahead.





Portia and Shane run through
a clearing in the woods.
The leaves crackle and crunch
beneath their feet. What
will they find in the woods?





Portia finds an insect called
a walking stick crawling on a leaf.
It looks like a twig with legs.



Before autumn comes, female
walking sticks lay eggs
that will hatch in the spring.
Walking sticks die in cold weather,
but some other insects do not.
In their hive, buzzing bees store
honey they will eat in winter.
Caterpillars spin a covering that
protects them. A ladybug finds
shelter under a piece of bark.

A black bear wanders around in an autumn snowstorm. In the fall, the bear looks for a den where it can spend the coldest days of winter.

Now the days are chilly. The nights are long and cold. Soon the bear will go into its cozy den and sleep. Autumn is almost over, and winter is on the way.







Maple leaves sparkle with frost as
the sun sets on an autumn afternoon.

Cover: Portia carries a heavy pumpkin
that will become a Halloween jack-o'-lantern.

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